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Identical letters dated 15 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon the instruction of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the letter from Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, on the threat of use of force by the Russian Federation against Georgia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 162 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/57/150.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 15 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The current circumstances are forcing the Government of Georgia to appeal to you with the request to duly respond to the statement of the President of the Russian Federation made on 11 September 2002 in which President Putin, while relying exclusively on the Russian version of the situation in the Pankisi Gorge in eastern Georgia, resorted to an undisguised threat of force towards a neighbouring State — a member of the United Nations.

One cannot describe otherwise the accusations put forward with respect to the situation in the Pankisi Gorge. In addition, public opinion is actively being formed whereby problems existing in the Pankisi Gorge are presented as ones that beget and fuel troubles in Chechnya and elsewhere in southern Russia. It is hard to imagine a clearer example of confusing the cause and the effect. In reality, problems in the Pankisi Gorge have arisen specifically as a result of the military operation conducted in Chechnya, during which Russian armed forces could not or would not keep military actions within the boundaries of Russia and allowed the "spreading" of the conflict onto the territory of a well-disposed, friendly, sovereign neighbouring nation.

Georgia has repeatedly voiced public warnings regarding the inadmissibility and danger of a spillover of the conflict onto its territory; relevant statements were made in all major international organizations. Regrettably, however, our appeals never evoked a due response from the Russian side. Moreover, according to the available materials, armed individuals were, in fact, allowed to enter the territory of Georgia through the official Russian border checkpoints.

At the same time, Russia's mass media and public officials, the leadership of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation in particular, started to heat up the situation by asserting that Georgia was the main supplier of armaments to the conflict zone. In order to prove the absurdity of such statements, which must be obvious to anyone who has at least once observed the terrain of this mountainous region, Georgia has demanded and achieved the establishment of international control on the Chechen and Ingush segments of the Georgian-Russian State border. The activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission, which, incidentally, includes several Russian observers as well, have clearly demonstrated that there has been no threat to Russia emanating from Georgia. On the other hand, during the same period of time the OSCE observers have recorded numerous violations of Georgia's sovereignty by Russian bombers and military helicopters as they attacked adjacent villages, which caused wounds and loss of life among innocent civilians.

Despite the indisputable proof of the acts of aggression that Georgia and the OSCE observers have at their disposal, Moscow denies the above-mentioned bombings and refuses to conduct a joint investigation.

All of the above gives one sufficient ground to think that the issue of the Pankisi Gorge is artificially sustained in order to pressure Georgia, to tarnish its international reputation, to provoke destabilization and to disrupt the

implementation of the major economic projects of the Europe-Asia transport corridor and the transit of hydrocarbons from the Caspian region through Georgia.

The accusation of the violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) dated 28 September 2001 brought against Georgia is based on a somewhat arbitrary interpretation of the document and appears to be an attempt to discredit an active member of the international anti-terrorist coalition, whose positive contribution to the struggle against terrorism has been noted on many occasions by the leading nations of the aforementioned coalition, which also happen to be members of the United Nations Security Council.

Here one also ought to point out the unaptness of the reference to article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which allows the attacked State to render armed resistance in order to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Russian Federation has not been subjected to armed aggression by Georgia, while those armed individuals penetrating the territory of Georgia from Russia and then moving back are mostly citizens of the Russian Federation, who have been methodically "squeezed" out onto the Georgian territory.

Incidentally, it is worth recalling that some of those who fought in Chechnya had previously received combat experience in 1992-1993, in the war against Georgia. At the time, many organized groups of the Chechen fighters led by Basaev, who is currently regarded by Russia as the chief terrorist, were dispatched to Georgia with the assistance of the Russian special services. Any protest on the part of the Georgian Government was invariably met with a cynical remark that the Russian authorities did not bear any responsibility for the penetration of "volunteers" from the territory of Russia and that Georgia must unilaterally provide security on its borders. Also, one can hardly keep from remembering that it was the Russian military aircraft that kept bombing Sukhumi and other peaceful communities.

Today, the opposite is asserted regarding the Pankisi Gorge. Repeated attempts are being made to blame Georgia for its inability to provide security for Russia on the Chechen segment of the Georgian-Russian State border, where the current situation has been deliberately created by the Russian Federation itself.

For our part, we have been trying to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. In my letter to the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, I have once more appealed to the leadership of Russia and the President himself to find a common tongue, to rise above the existing problems and to develop good-neighbourly relations between our peoples. We have also indicated our readiness to receive an OSCE group of experts, including representatives of the Russian Federation, who will be provided with opportunities to visit any site at any time and will be expected to write a report on the actual situation on the ground. Yet, I am convinced that only with the active support of the world community of nations will we manage to maintain territorial integrity and provide security for the Georgian people.

We are appealing to you with the hope that the international community will not allow the violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a Member State of the United Nations to take place and will guard Georgia from acts of aggression by one of the mighty military-political powers of the world.

(*Signed*) Eduard **Shevardnadze**